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NARCOTIC DRUGS

Update of the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Drug Abuse Control

Note by the Secretary-General

In paragraph 5 of its resolution 47/100 of 16 December 1992, the General Assembly requested the Administrative Committee on Coordination to give due attention in its work to the coordination of drug control activities and, under the direction of the Executive Director of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme, to update the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Drug Abuse Control for the consideration of the Economic and Social Council at its regular session of 1993 and of the General Assembly at its forty-eighth session. The Secretary-General has the honour to submit the report, annexed to the present note, to the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council.

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INTRODUCTION

1. In General Assembly resolution 44/141 of 15 December 1989, adopted shortly before the seventeenth special session in February 1990, when it met to examine the international drug control situation, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chairman of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC), "to coordinate ... development of a United Nations system-wide action plan on drug abuse control aimed at the full implementation of all existing mandates and subsequent decisions of intergovernmental bodies throughout the United Nations system". In the same resolution, States were asked to consider requesting the Secretary-General to appoint experts to elaborate a global programme of action at its seventeenth special session.

2. Subsequently, on 23 February 1990, the General Assembly adopted resolution S-17/2, by which it approved a Political Declaration and a Global Programme of Action outlining activities Governments could usefully undertake to combat drug abuse and trafficking. In that resolution, the Assembly emphasized the importance of the development of the United Nations System-Wide Action Plan on Drug Abuse Control.

3. A first version of the United Nations System-Wide Action Plan (E/1990/39 and Corr.1 and 2) was reviewed by the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) at the first part of its thirtieth session in 1990. 1/ CPC concluded that there was scope for a more rigorous approach to the question and that the first version did not achieve the "balance" of the Global Programme of Action. That position was endorsed by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1990/87 of 27 July 1990 leading to a revision of the System-Wide Action Plan (E/1990/39/Add.1).

4. Following the establishment of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP), the Secretary-General was requested by the General Assembly, in resolution 45/179 of 21 December 1990, to review the revised United Nations System-Wide Action Plan on Drug Abuse Control in the light of structural changes brought about by the creation of the Programme. The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 1991/38 of 21 June 1991, entrusted the Commission on Narcotic Drugs with the formal mandate to review the development and implementation of the System-Wide Action Plan.

5. In the course of 1991/92, further work on revising and updating the System-Wide Action Plan was reviewed during sessions of the Inter-Agency Meeting on Coordination in Matters of International Drug Abuse Control, a subsidiary body of ACC; and of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, which, at its thirty-fifth session (6-15 April 1992), established a separate agenda item for consideration of the development and implementation of the System-Wide Action Plan, beginning at its thirty-sixth session (29 March-7 April 1993).

6. On 16 December 1992, the General Assembly adopted resolution 47/100 relating to the implementation of both the System-Wide Action Plan and the Global Programme of Action. In that resolution, the Assembly expressed concern at the "limited progress by the agencies of the United Nations system in incorporating within their programmes and activities action aimed at dealing

with drug-related problems in the manner envisioned in the System-Wide Action Plan".

7. In paragraph 2 of the resolution, the General Assembly reaffirms the commitment expressed in the Global Programme of Action and the Comprehensive Multidisciplinary Outline of Future Activities in Drug Abuse Control (CMO). 2/ In paragraph 2, the Assembly calls upon all relevant United Nations agencies to establish agency-specific implementation plans for inclusion in an annex to the System-Wide Action Plan. The governing bodies of those agencies are called upon, in paragraph 3, to facilitate implementation of the Action Plan by designating, at their next regular meeting, an agenda item under which the Action Plan may be considered. The role of the Executive Director of UNDCP "to coordinate and provide effective leadership for all United Nations drug control activities" is reaffirmed in paragraph 4 of the resolution. Action requested of ACC by the General Assembly in paragraph 5 of the resolution includes updating the System-Wide Action Plan for consideration by the Economic and Social Council at its regular session of 1993 and by the General Assembly at its forty-eighth session.

8. The present document has accordingly been prepared to respond to the request in paragraph 5 of General Assembly resolution 47/100.

9. In paragraph 5 (b) of General Assembly resolution 47/100, ACC is requested to include in the updated System-Wide Action Plan references to the important role of the international financial institutions, and to the ability of such institutions to promote economic stability and undermine the illicit drug industry. In that connection, attention is drawn to the report of the Executive Director on the activities of UNDCP (E/CN.7/1993/3) which, in paragraphs 26 to 29, outlines the present state of development of cooperation with the international financial institutions (see also paras. 61 to 63 below).

10. In view of the extensive documentation provided by the specialized agencies and other entities in the United Nations system on the extent of their current and projected programmes, the focus of the present document is designed to respond to the resolution and hence focuses in particular on the definition of a global Strategy. It includes a selection of projected responses which the United Nations system could offer to meet emerging priorities in drug abuse control activities, but these will be amplified further in the subsequent formulation of the agency-specific implementation plans designed to give effect to the Strategy.

11. While the immediate objective of the current review is to assist all relevant United Nations agencies to establish agency-specific implementation plans for full incorporation into their programmes, as provided in paragraph 2 of General Assembly resolution 47/100, it is hoped that the observations included in the present document will also be of assistance to all governing bodies of agencies in the United Nations system in their respective consideration of the agenda item designated for consideration of the Action Plan, as requested in paragraph 3 of that resolution.

I. POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

A. The United Nations system

12. Reviewing the range of drug control activities undertaken and projected by the United Nations system as a whole provides an encouraging perspective of determined efforts and imaginative responses to the objectives set forth in the Global Programme of Action and its predecessor, the Comprehensive Multidisciplinary Outline of Future Activities in Drug Abuse Control (CMO). This positive impression is enhanced by the variety of techniques now being evolved to make maximum use of the mandates, resources and expertise of an increasing number of agencies in the system, acting together and also in cooperation with regional and subregional organizations, with bilateral and multilateral programmes, as well as with entities outside the system whose governmental or non-governmental mandates enable them to contribute to the efforts to achieve a balanced programme to reduce both demand for and supply of illicit drugs.

13. The prolonged efforts made by the international community to rationalize objectives for a world-wide drug control strategy and, subsequently, to give effect to the strategy by reorganizing existing entities as the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) have now begun to show results reflected in a more coherent programme of management by objective.

14. Over the years, the mandates of United Nations entities have been profoundly influenced by the international drug control treaties. The drug control system as it now exists has evolved incrementally since the first Opium Conference in 1909, and institutional arrangements evolved under the aegis of the League of Nations are reflected in, for example, the mandates of the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB), as well as in the provisions of the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1961, 3/ which embodies agreements achieved in a series of conventions adopted between the two World Wars. At each successive stage, subsequent agreements such as the 1971 Convention on Psychotropic Substances 4/ and the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988 5/ reflect the maximum possible extent of consensus achieved by Member States on drug abuse control at the time of adoption. These control mechanisms have gradually been established over the years with the active participation of the United Nations system, and do not require elaboration in this context.

15. While the existing treaty base is not entirely comprehensive, development of a coherent overall programme of activities and the establishment of UNDCP as a flexible mechanism for its implementation should make it possible to move forward with the Global Programme of Action and with the related activities of the United Nations Decade against Drug Abuse (1991-2000), which is now well under way. The Global Programme of Action and the activities of the Decade should provide sufficient direction for action for the remainder of the Decade and should permit the most efficient concentration of scarce resources to the problem.

16. The rationalization of the United Nations structure for international drug control has been accompanied by the definition of the role of the Executive Director of UNDCP to include responsibility to coordinate and provide effective

leadership for all United Nations drug control activities and to ensure coordination, complementarily and non-duplication of such activities across the United Nations system (General Assembly resolutions 46/102 of 16 December 1992 and 47/100). Participation of UNDCP in the work of ACC has facilitated the rationalization of drug control activities throughout the system.

17. In exercising those responsibilities, the Executive Director has had the advantage of the support and cooperation of an increasing range of agencies and entities within the system. The development of new techniques for coordination, as reported to the Commission on Narcotic Drugs at its thirty-sixth session (E/CN.7/1993/3, particularly paras. 17-46), has been encouraging. Of particular significance are the coordination arrangements evolved with the main development assistance organizations, as well as with regional and international financial institutions.

18. An important aspect of the coordination process is the creation and maintenance of a readily accessible database on programmes carried out and projected within the United Nations system, as well as access to comparable systems maintained by multilateral, regional and bilateral organizations. Work on emplacing such a system is now in the initial stages, and is being undertaken in the first instance in such specific programme areas as law enforcement training, activities in the field of demand reduction, assessment of the nature and extent of drug abuse and tracking of data on illicit traffic. It is, however, an area of such compelling importance to effective management that it is considered appropriate, even at this early level of activity, to bring this initiative to the attention of all entities working on the updating of the Action Plan.

19. Coordination of technical cooperation activities in drug abuse control, as in other fields, must be pursued above all at the operational level, that is, in specific countries and regions. The technical consultations initiated by UNDCP in 1992 with the Islamabad consultation on South-West Asia - to which all interested United Nations agencies were invited - represent a significant step in this direction. The decision of the Joint Consultative Group on Policy (JCGP) to establish a Task Force on Drug Control (which has already identified several countries where joint programmes could be developed) is another initiative that should be pursued.

B. Needs of Member States

20. Since the viability of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme is ultimately measured by the effectiveness of its response to the needs of Member States, it is of some importance to note that UNDCP is now funding a total of 152 projects, of which 99 respond to requests from Member States on an individual basis and 24 on a regional basis. The remaining 30 projects are organized on a global basis, reflecting in most cases more generalized needs expressed through regional or global bodies.

21. A welcome trend is the increase in the number of projects that are jointly funded by UNDCP and other agencies of the system. Additional drug control projects are being implemented by agencies of the system with funds from sources

other than UNDCP. A considerable amount of work is also being carried out by UNDCP or specialized agencies with funding from UNDCP.

22. The range of those requests is reflected in the interim report of the Secretary-General on the implementation by Member States of the Global Programme of Action (E/CN.7/1993/7), prepared for initial consideration by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs at its thirty-sixth session in response to a request in General Assembly resolution 47/99 of 16 December 1992. It may be noted that an updated formulation of the report will be prepared for consideration by the General Assembly at its forty-eighth session later in 1993. The Secretary-General's interim report, which is also of direct interest, includes recommendations for further action by Member States.

23. It is likely that Governments of Member States will take these recommendations into account in formulating requests for future assistance from the United Nations system. Agencies in the system may accordingly find it helpful to refer to those recommendations relevant to their respective mandates in preparing future agency-specific implementation plans which, in accordance with paragraph 2 of General Assembly resolution 47/100, are to be included in an annex to the System-Wide Action Plan.

II. GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

A. Developments since formulation of the Comprehensive Multidisciplinary Outline of Future Activities in Drug Abuse Control

24. The analysis of action needed on the part of the world community to deal with drug abuse and illicit trafficking, which is embodied in the Comprehensive Multidisciplinary Outline and subsequently reflected in the Global Programme of Action, was carried out in the mid-1980s. The CMO addressed in some detail the many aspects of the drug problem, serving as a useful guideline for planners at the national and international levels. At that time, drug abuse affected large numbers of people in many different countries, with widespread recognition that the developing countries were just as vulnerable as industrialized countries and, in some cases, even more so because of the limited resources available for countermeasures.

B. Secondary effects of major social disruptions

25. Since that initial effort at system-wide and global planning, an assortment of political upheavals, geopolitical changes, pandemics, economic recessions, technological restructuring and natural disasters has been battering many regions of the world, confronting Member States with a diversity of challenges to their capacity to take remedial action within their own societies, as well as to act collectively for the safety and well-being of the global community.

26. Each one of those major events has had the sad secondary effect of increasing the number of groups at risk of drug abuse and addiction. In rural areas devastated by famine and insurrection, in urban settings plagued by unemployment, in the restructuring of entire economies and the downsizing

consequent to the introduction of technological changes, in refugee camps and settlements for asylum seekers sheltering the homeless and the destitute, drugs are offered as a false promise of temporary escape.

27. Conversely, drug abuse clearly has adverse health and social consequences affecting all sectors of the population. They exacerbate further existing social ills among the urban poor. Any strategic approach must take into account those patterns of abuse and their health, social and economic implications.

28. Drug trafficking networks have not been slow to develop the potential market among the displaced and demoralized. It is, in addition, not difficult to recruit drug dealers and carriers for activities requiring no capital and no training save to avoid all contact with the law and the tax authorities.

29. Drug abuse and illicit trafficking are two of the secondary effects of major social disruptions, and the United Nations system is deeply engaged in mobilizing resources to move with Governments and relief agencies to deal with the multiple problems and to help individual people to regain perspective and the capacity to help themselves.

30. The techniques already developed for joint action and cooperation between agencies in UNDCP programme delivery could now be usefully brought into play by building drug control elements into programmes for retraining for employment opportunities, rural resettlement, health care, maternal and child welfare, creation of transportation and communication networks, restructuring of legal systems and a range of other activities which could usefully build in capacity for drug demand reduction, safeguards against the illicit drug traffic and legal modalities in line with provisions of the international drug control.

C. Protection of the environment

31. The environment is placed at risk both by those who raise narcotic plants - either by clearing areas for illicit cultivation or by use of dangerous herbicides and other chemicals - and by those who cause the run-off of chemicals used in the manufacturing process of marketable drugs.

32. Environmental hazards resulting from illicit plant cultivation and manufacturing of drugs are not a new development but the dimensions of the difficulty are expanding rapidly in areas where government authority is weak or disintegrating. Efforts to correct or prevent this additional harm to the environment thus adds to the list of other socio-economic problems, in particular in developing countries - arms trafficking, basic security and hard-core underdevelopment, which exist in symbiosis with illicit drug production and the intimidating tactics of drug traffickers.

D. Drug-trafficking networks linked to organized crime

33. Organized crime networks continue to be a manifestation of counter-cultures operating outside the structures of established societies. Two elements have, however, been added to enhance the disruptive capacity of organized gangs, which in turn make it necessary for Governments to take countermeasures, both

separately and in cooperation, and for the United Nations system to respond to the needs of the membership by devising appropriate tactics and methodology.

34. The disruptive capacity of drug-trafficking networks has been greatly enlarged by modern communications technology, so that their activities are being planned and coordinated on a global scale, and resources shifted in anticipation of measures taken by law enforcement authorities. Indeed, money-laundering has become one of the major problems associated with drug trafficking, as it enables not only the accumulation of even greater illicit profits, but also distorts national economies and hinders legitimate economic growth.

35. Further opportunities for profit and for accumulation of power and control over society are offered by turmoil and unrest in areas undergoing political restructuring and suffering from insurrections, civil war and serious social conflict. Civil unrest and disrespect for civil authorities result in increased arms trafficking, a criminal activity closely linked to the trafficking of illicit drugs. Trafficking in narcotic drugs and in psychotropic substances thus provides a main commercial basis for the activities of the illegal networks, which also continue to derive profits from such activities as the arms trade, and trafficking in human beings. Those resources are in turn used for bribery and corruption in many areas of government, undermining the fabric of society itself.

36. A number of new or enhanced techniques have been developed in recent years to counter those phenomena. Among them are improved methods for extradition and judicial cooperation, as well as the introduction of procedures for seizure and forfeiture of the proceeds of drug crimes. Furthermore, international cooperation has permitted considerable progress in addressing the money-laundering problem. Lastly, the United Nations has taken on a direct role in the operation of the control and monitoring system of precursors and essential chemicals used in the illicit manufacture of drugs. In all these new initiatives, UNDCP and relevant United Nations system partners work hand-in-hand. Priority is being given to transnational, organized and economic crime including money-laundering, and crimes against the environment.

37. While these techniques are proving helpful in law enforcement, the overall situation is not improving, as evidence of the increased activities of tongs, mafias and narco-traficantes multiplies in the courts and in the media. Activities to strengthen the mandates and capacities of the law enforcement authorities need to be reinforced by providing expertise and coordinating capacity to the criminal justice system as a whole, with special emphasis on the role and responsibilities of the judicial system and of penal institutions at the national level. It may, in addition, be opportune for the United Nations system to expedite consideration of the possibilities and options for judicial action at the international level to act for the world community as a whole.

E. Programme implications

38. Elements related to the impact of the three ongoing developments, which are briefly sketched out in sections B to D above, figure increasingly in government requests for assistance now being received by UNDCP. Analysis of interventions made by Member States in various United Nations forums also indicate that those

considerations weigh heavily on the membership. It would therefore seem appropriate at this stage to anticipate that requests for help will increase both in number and in scope, and that capacity to respond to such requests could well be augmented and suitable preparatory elements be included in programme planning up to the culmination of the United Nations Decade against Drug Abuse in the year 2000.

III. SECTORAL PERSPECTIVE

39. From the substantive viewpoint, updating the System-Wide Action Plan entails, in the first instance, a review of the matters flagged for action in the report on the implementation by Member States of the Global Programme of Action. The recommendations brought to the attention of the General Assembly in the report focus on programme elements now in need of intensified effort.

40. Additionally, the concerns set forth in the preceding paragraphs signal a range of areas of concern which now need to be addressed by the agencies and entities in the United Nations system mandated with primary responsibility in the specific areas of competence.

41. In these times of budgetary restraint, it is recognized that the updating exercise is not a simple matter of addition. Cutbacks in existing programmes or in projects in the pipeline so as to accommodate new and pressing concerns can be counterproductive, and response to emergencies can impinge on steady commitment to programme elements requiring sustained support if they are to succeed in remedying deep-rooted problems.

42. A partial solution to this difficulty may in several instances be derived from the innovative techniques for cooperation between several agencies in programme formulation, funding and delivery. Similarly, recourse to the establishment of master plans can usefully avoid compartmentalization and tangling lines of responsibility.

43. The technical obstacles posed by conflicting budget cycles can be overcome by phasing programme elements within the time-frame of the United Nations Decade against Drug Abuse, which is to culminate in the year 2000. It may be assumed that further guidance on the direction of the international drug control effort will be forthcoming before that date.

44. The technical matter of appropriate presentation of joint projects reflecting cooperative activity by several agencies within the format of the "agency-specific implementing plans", as requested in paragraph 2 of General Assembly resolution 47/100 of 16 December 1992, will be dealt with by consultation in the context of preparing the annex requested in paragraph 5 (a) of the resolution.

45. The following brief outline of areas suggested for attention in the context of updating the Action Plan groups some possible programme elements under the relevant sections of the Global Programme of Action.

A. Prevention and reduction of drug abuse

46. Two basic principles are recognized as vital to efforts to prevent drug abuse before it develops and to deal with the initial abuse of drugs in a way which will prevent the development of dependence. First of all, demand reduction programmes generally have greater chance of being effective if they are rooted in supportive environments. This requires obtaining active support for demand reduction initiatives from parents, community leaders and local institutions. It is worth noting that, when communities or specific groups within communities (for example, parents' groups) are motivated and mobilized, they can become a voice which is heard in political circles, thus generating more support not only for direct demand reduction programmes, but also for measures which can help address some of the economic or social causes of the abuse problem in the particular community.

47. The second basic principle is the importance to demand reduction of careful focus on specific target groups. This not only permits the fine-tuning of the prevention message, but also facilitates the development of positive peer pressure, long recognized as a major influence, especially with young people. Reports from a number of countries indicate positive results in prevention work in educational institutions. Similar results have also been reported in programmes targeted to the workplace, for employees and their families. In contrast, undifferentiated mass media campaigns have had only mixed results.

48. Ideally, prevention programmes combine both of those principles. The message and the service offered need to be carefully tuned so as to reach a specific target group. At the same time, that needs to be done in a supportive environment, which forms the "community" in which the target group lives, works, studies or relaxes.

49. No segment of society is safe from the threat of drug abuse, and careful monitoring of abuse trends is required to ensure appropriate prevention initiatives. Many especially high-risk groups have been identified over the years, such as out-of-school youth, street children, rural-to-urban migrants, the urban poor, the socially disaffected and numerous others specific to local situations. In recent years, several new high-risk groups have emerged, notably:

(a) Indigenous peoples. While alcohol rather than drugs is often cited as a main problem, reports are multiplying of specific problems with drugs among indigenous groups, involving especially cannabis and inhalants. There is no doubt that indigenous groups are in a high-risk situation, as the impact of industrialized society has to a large extent shattered the social and economic base of communal societies, with resulting chronic depression and despair. The experience and guidance of indigenous people's councils and communities will be essential to efforts of the United Nations system to address this often neglected problem.

(b) The elderly. Drug abuse efforts have tended to address the young as the most vulnerable group. The drug abuse problems of the elderly have been largely overlooked in the setting of priorities. Misuse and overuse of psychotropic substances have nevertheless been evident for some time, as has the problems of over-medication and excessive prescribing and misuse of

tranquilizers in institutions caring for the elderly. As the proportion of the population which is elderly begins to increase in more and more countries, the call for specialized demand reduction programmes will undoubtedly grow as well.

(c) The unemployed and underemployed. Unemployment has long been accepted as a factor contributing to drug abuse, through the vectors of poverty and despair that it breeds. The very recent past has seen the unemployment rate soar to the highest levels in many years in countries all over the world. In many of those countries, drugs are at present available as never before. This volatile combination is a cause of great concern, calling for pro-active programmes of prevention involving trade unions, employers' associations, community support mechanisms and government initiatives. The problem is exacerbated by the attraction of drug trafficking as a means of obtaining income when the legitimate economy offers no chance.

(d) Refugees, asylum-seekers and displaced persons. This high-risk group is the tragic by-product of the famines, natural disasters and dislocations of entire communities caused by civil unrest and political disintegration. Their plight must of course be addressed by emergency relief and care prior to return or resettlement. The vulnerability of such groups to drug abuse is clearly established, especially in areas of high availability of illicit drugs. Furthermore, drug trafficking presents a tempting opportunity to solve some of the immediate problems of survival.

50. These particular high-risk groups have been singled out in order to signal the need for preventive action. This is not to diminish the importance of a continued focus on demand-reduction activities aimed at the community, school, family, and work environment, underlying the key role of such social structures in the struggle against drug abuse.

51. Like all other high-risk groups, those recently recognized groups require specially tailored demand reduction programmes, involving a wide range of United Nations organizations and programmes. In keeping with its mandate, UNDCP is endeavouring to bring those issues to the attention of the appropriate United Nations partners and to assist within the means available to it.

B. Treatment, rehabilitation and social reintegration of drug addicts

52. The wide-ranging implications for social policy and for allocation of resources to research and to the establishment and maintenance of treatment services have made this component of the Global Programme of Action fall significantly behind other areas in implementation of programme objectives. Inability to devise adequate responses to the need is implicit in the report on programme implementation by Member States, and elements on current activities and forward planning now included in the System-Wide Action Plan reinforce the impression that additional attention is needed so that this important element of the Global Programme of Action receives the guidance and support merited by the increasing number of drug abusers in need of help and treatment in all regions.

53. The General Assembly may accordingly also wish to give attention to this programme area at the four high-level plenary meetings scheduled for its

forthcoming forty-eighth session, so that the effectiveness of cooperation in the international community may be expanded and increased in line with the purpose set forth in paragraph 1 (b) of resolution 47/99 of 16 December 1992.

54. Among the obstacles encountered in this programme area is lack of knowledge of existing methods of treatment and rehabilitation. While detoxification may bring the addict back approximately to the point where drug abuse began, provision of support and guidance is needed in order to adjust to family, working and social life. While rehabilitation needs time, it does not have to be expensive and can succeed if proper after-care programmes are put in place. Recidivism rates for addicts following completion of detoxification combined with treatment and rehabilitation vary. Innovative approaches and well-planned programmes could measurably lower this recidivism.

55. The availability of medication to reduce the craving for addictive drugs is severely limited, and is of necessity drug-specific. While some research is being done by government research institutes and by several pharmaceutical corporations, significant results have not as yet been achieved in identifying medications to reduce the craving for cocaine, for cannabis and for heroin and other opiates. Similarly, little progress has been recorded in the field of specific treatment of addictions to the major types of psychotropic substances.

56. In mobilizing resources for treatment programmes, drug abuse is a poor competitor against, for example, cancer and AIDS, which attract appreciably more attention, particularly in the media. In point of fact, the provision of free needles to drug abusers as a method for preventing the spread of AIDS also sends the clear message to drug abusers that treatment of their addiction is of less significance to society than the prevention of AIDS. Analysis of the validity of free-needle distribution in preventing the spread of AIDS would be a timely undertaking, particularly if accompanied by evaluation of the effects of the "free needles" programme on the spread of drug addiction. Research in this area would be particularly helpful to Member States with developing economies, as the "free-needles" programme has largely been initiated in Western Europe and North America.

57. Treatment and rehabilitation programmes rarely receive high priority. The United Nations system has come to accept this principle and endeavours to deliver projects and provide services to Member States which will promote realistic programmes of treatment, rehabilitation and reintegration into society, in closer cooperation, wherever and whenever possible and feasible, with relevant non-governmental organizations. The system recognizes that such programmes are indispensable, however complex they may be.

C. Control of supply of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances

58. Supply control of the licit supply of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances was the original basis for concerted action by the international community in the early years of the century, and the techniques for estimating national requirements for medical and scientific purposes have steadily evolved into a working mechanism of benefit to developed and developing economies in their efforts to ensure that necessary narcotic drugs and psychotropic

substances are available in appropriate quantities to meet domestic medical needs, and to prevent their diversion into illicit traffic.

59. Illicit cultivation of narcotic plants is a major and persistent problem currently exacerbated by civil unrest, inability of law enforcement authorities to control the full extent of national territory and, in several extreme cases, near collapse of government structures. Drug trafficking networks have promptly taken advantage of the opportunity and, in the process of increasing the supply of narcotic plants, severe damage is being inflicted on the environment by destructive ground clearing and by dangerous chemicals used to process the illicit crops for marketing purposes. Action to counteract damage to the environment is undertaken by several agencies in the United Nations system and includes response to requests from Governments to identify safe chemical and biological agents for eradication purposes.

60. A recent phenomenon is the rapid expansion of the manufacture of a variety of synthetic drugs of abuse in clandestine processing laboratories. This trend, originally limited to a few countries and to a handful of synthetic drugs (amphetamine, methamphetamine, phencyclidine and LSD), has over the last five years been affecting entire geographic regions, using highly sophisticated methodology. This phenomenon adds a new dimension to current priorities in international drug control activities and is being addressed by the establishment of an international monitoring system for chemicals used for such illicit manufacture.

61. It is clearly inadequate to address the illicit cultivation issue within the narrow context of replacement crops and of alternative development measures addressed only to the specific area of cultivation. The role of UNDCP is limited to removing direct economic dependence on an illicit crop through localized intensive alternative development measures. These can only succeed over the long term if other parts of the system, notably the financial institutions, can focus their own efforts on the longer-term sustainable development not only of directly concerned areas, but also of the broader zones surrounding them, in order first of all to encourage overall economic development, but also to discourage the spread of illicit cultivation into areas where it had previously not occurred. Those measures in the countries concerned need to be supported as well by action on a global level to enhance market access for legitimate products from the areas in question.

62. Illicit drug cultivation has had a massive impact on the economies of the most severely affected States, and has distorted financial structures and negatively influenced investment potential for future development, making the sustained participation of the international financial institutions in the supply control process crucial to achieving significant improvements in gross national product over the longer term. The initial steps taken by the international financial institutions and the regional development banks constitute a promising beginning in the effort to cleanse the economies of the countries concerned of the continuing threat of a counter-economy based primarily on illicit drug cultivation.

63. As a result of increasing demand for drugs abroad and rural poverty at home, owing inter alia to dramatic falls in prices of several agricultural commodities, some developing countries are becoming increasingly dependent on

foreign exchange from commodities whose international trade is illegal. While the developing nations in which the raw materials are grown probably only see a small part of the total income of illegal retail drug sales (estimated at over $300 billion), drug income is still large with respect to total exports for several of them. For two countries it is estimated that export earnings from illicit drugs far exceed their total recorded exports. It has been argued, for example, that prices for farmers' traditional crops, especially coffee and cocoa, have fallen so much in recent years that it has become easier to induce them to turn to growing coca. Income per hectare from coca production is estimated to be between $1,500 to $3,500 per year, while that of coffee varied between $700 and $1,000. Growing illicit crops such as coca generally not only pays better than other crops but it is also a hardier plant, it is harvested four times a year and provides a more stable income. While anti-drug enforcement activities may help to reduce the supply, international agreements for commodities which would ensure stable incomes for producers would go a long way in addressing the supply side aspect of illicit drug production.

64. This important area is singled out as a potential breakthrough in inter-agency cooperation, possibly providing for a comprehensive approach to restoring integrity at the economic base and for eventual diversification into constructive investments at the secondary and tertiary levels of economic activity.

65. In that context, reference must be made to the national master-plan approach, whose three key elements (an assessment of drug control problems; an articulation of government policies, strategies and coordinating mechanisms to address those problems; and an outline of the programmes and projects to be implemented, with or without recourse to external assistance) ensure that drug issues are dealt with in a comprehensive, integrated and balanced manner, and which offers a solid basis on which to design technical cooperation activities. UNDCP emphasizes provision of system-wide assistance organized in response to national master plans prepared by Governments in cooperation with the agencies concerned, as well as subregional projects in which the Governments cooperate to carry out drug control activities extending beyond national frontiers.

66. The implementation of national master plans, however well designed, can be jeopardized if they are not accompanied by parallel and coordinated action on the part of neighbouring States. Illicit drug producers and traffickers have shown themselves all too able to exploit uncoordinated policies and measures in different States taking advantage of the weakest link in the chain of control. Therefore the system should attach high priority to a subregional approach, recently adopted in a few regions, whereby neighbouring States agree on joint action to deal with the interrelated problems of drug production, trafficking and abuse.

D. Suppression of illicit trafficking in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances

67. Programme activity directed at the suppression of illicit trafficking has substantially increased since the adoption and subsequent entry into force of the 1988 Convention. 6/ The majority of projects undertaken relate to law enforcement and these projects focus on development of capability and capacity

to interdict the illicit traffic: training, technical support and coordination of law enforcement. In that context, increasing attention is being paid to the development of mechanisms which permit the exchange of drug intelligence.

68. The agencies concerned with air transport and maritime shipping cooperate in assuring security of aircraft and ships and controlling drug abuse by personnel on board. Those initiatives, however, are limited in scope, and security measures concerning road and rail transport have not as yet been formulated on an interregional basis. Cooperative action by the agencies and organizations concerned with the transport of goods and commodities is of particular significance in view of the increased use of land/sea containers in international trade. Overland trucking routes are also a significant factor in the illicit drug traffic, and it would be helpful to enlist the support of the industry in evolving a common methodology for interdicting the illicit transport of drugs.

69. The agencies concerned may wish to act jointly as convenors of meetings for discussions on the transport and shipping trades in order to exchange experience and techniques, and to improve security measures in sea and river ports, free ports, airports and trucking terminals. Training of crew members and truckers in identification of suspicious cargo, and the introduction of appropriate penalties for collusion with traffickers, could also be considered in this connection.

70. Traditionally, law enforcement has been the first line of defence against drug abuse. The 1988 Convention provides for the establishment of criminal offences and sanctions under national law, as well as measures to promote international cooperation to address such criminality.

71. One of the results of energetic law enforcement has been greater pressure on national criminal justice systems, both in the areas of enforcement and correction. Recent initiatives in the area of demand reduction aim to help address this problem by reducing the number of drug abuse offences. In addition, alternative forms of sentencing for drug abusers and addicts can provide a way of resolving this practical dilemma, the more so since they can reduce intermingling of suspects and persons convicted solely for drug abuse offences with the general prison population. For example, the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for Non-Custodial Measures (The "Tokyo Rules", General Assembly resolution 45/110) could be applied more in national legislation. The programmes and entities concerned may therefore find it useful to consult together on the research elements needed for formulating policy in this area. Involving the expertise of non-governmental professional and occupational organizations could be advantageous. Custodial measures may, however, be expected by persons convicted of drug trafficking offences, which are often linked to organized crime and can be associated with a range of other serious crimes.

72. Judicial systems at the national level may also encounter problems adjudicating the increasingly complex matters arising from drug trafficking offences, as well as investigating and collecting evidence in such cases. Increased international cooperation can be of assistance in these areas.

IV. CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

73. The activities of the agencies of the United Nations system are reported in a multiplicity of documents presented to a variety of budgetary and policy-making organs. In the case of the present document, an effort has been made to select for special attention cooperative action and techniques which could effectively make an actual difference in the scope and delivery of system-wide United Nations programmes in international drug control.

74. At the same time, the possibility of reviewing United Nations efforts in the context of the report on activities undertaken by Member States to implement the Global Programme of Action (E/CN.7/1991/7) makes it possible to identify areas where additional action could usefully be undertaken to respond to the needs of the international community as formulated in the CMO and the Global Programme of Action.

Notes

1/ See Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 16 (A/45/16), part one.

2/ See Report of the International Conference on Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, Vienna, 17-26 June 1987 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.87.I.18), chap. I, sect. A.

3/ United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 520, No. 7515.

4/ Ibid., vol. 1019, No. 14956.

5/ E/CONF.82/15 and Corr.2.

6/ Ibid.